

Montana's Statewide Immunization Information System (IIS) — imMTrax

Immunization information systems (IIS) are confidential, population-based, computerized databases that record all immunization doses administered by participating providers to persons residing within a given geopolitical area. Montana's system is called *imMTrax*. Such systems are an important resource for consumers and healthcare providers and provide:

- Consolidated immunization histories at the point-of-care for use by a healthcare provider for determining appropriate client immunizations,
- Data for use in determining immunization coverage levels and guiding public health action for improving immunization coverage rates, and
- Quick and convenient access to immunization records often required for attendance in childcare, school, or work settings.

Montana's IIS has proven to be a useful resource for consumers (immunization recipients) and healthcare providers. As state and local public health departments, and healthcare providers work to improve immunization coverage and prevent outbreaks of disease, modernization of laws related to the IIS have been identified as a need.

Specifically, Montana is one of only three states requiring persons to "opt-in" the IIS by providing written consent. At least 40 states allow their IIS to collect information regarding administered immunizations unless the person elects to "opt-out".

The proposal below outlines advantages of an "opt-out". The "opt-out" approach will likely simplify the consent process saving resources for healthcare providers and consumers while still allowing personal choice regarding participation in the IIS.

Current Status — "Opt-in" Consent Model.

Currently, participation in imMTrax requires a person or their parent/guardian provide consent for sharing immunization information among authorized users. Upon signing the agreement, immunization information may be released to a public health agency, healthcare providers, and childcare facilities. The person or parent/guardian can revoke this authorization and have their immunization history removed at any time by contacting their local health department.

The process of obtaining consent has been noted as time consuming and burdensome by healthcare providers, schools, and childcare facilities, especially because very few persons or parents/guardians decline consent.

Proposed Change — "Opt-out" Consent Model.

An assessment of state IIS conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated approximately 40 states have "opt-out" models. Such approaches have

been demonstrated as cost- and time-saving while still allowing persons to not participate in the IIS. Montana estimates a cost-savings over a 10-year period of approximately \$270,000.

A two-part proposal is suggested for streamlining the approach for consent and sharing immunization information with authorized users.

- 1) Language explicitly allowing healthcare providers to share immunization information with the IIS unless a patient or patient representative "opts-out" of participation.
- 2) Language explicitly authorizing the sharing of immunization information among authorized users (healthcare providers, schools, childcare facilities, and public health agencies) when required for attendance or to ensure continuity of care. Persons opting out of the IIS would not be impacted by this provision given their information would not be stored in a database.